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## U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

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### **Newport Chemical Agent Disposal Facility successfully eliminates unexpected flammability characteristics**

Newport, Ind. — Workers here at the Newport Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (NECDF) have successfully eliminated the unexpected flammability characteristics discovered after a sampling analysis conducted in June on the caustic wastewater.

“Analytical results of caustic wastewater processed during this limited re-start of destruction operations show we have been successful in removing flammability from the process wastewater,” said Jeffrey Brubaker, NECDF Site Project Manager, “and as a result, operators have begun draining containers of VX into holding tanks within the destruction facility and neutralization operations are expected to resume this week.”

In June, an analysis of the wastewater conducted during a planned pause in operations showed that it had a flashpoint that would have classified it as flammable. Previous lab scale tests had shown a flash point above 200 degrees Fahrenheit, meaning the wastewater would not be classified as flammable. The presence of a chemical compound, diisopropylamine (DIPA) is believed to be the cause of the increased flammability, Brubaker said.

“In response to the June laboratory results, we put together a highly committed team of engineers who conducted a thorough analysis of possible causes and looked at all our options to reduce the flammability factor,” Brubaker said. “Once the analysis was completed, the team determined that we could eliminate the flammability characteristics by making adjustments to the neutralization processing procedures.”



For more information,  
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Brubaker said operators adjusted the process by mixing the VX, sodium hydroxide and hot water at the original reactor design temperature of 194 degrees Fahrenheit for about an hour, then lowering the reactor temperature for the remainder of the process. Another adjustment was passing nitrogen through the reactor to reduce the DIPA.

By varying the temperature and using nitrogen the wastewater now has a flashpoint which would classify it as non-flammable.

Brubaker said that prior to the wastewater lab analysis, agent destruction operations had been paused on June 10 when a valve leak occurred in a sealed containment area of the facility. The cause of the leak was a failed valve diaphragm housed in the reactor feed valves. "These diaphragm valves have been temporarily replaced with a more robust Teflon material until the site is able to install a more substantial ball type valve," Brubaker said.

Last week, one set of the ball type valves was installed in on one reactor. Work is expected to begin this week to equip the second reactor with the new ball-type valve.

"We anticipate that the agent destruction facility will undergo further operational pauses throughout the facility's life span," said Brubaker. "These pauses and facility modifications are vital to ensure optimum performance of the Newport facility.

"Safety is a hallmark of the chemical weapons disposal program and the workers here at Newport," Brubaker said. "That includes pausing, assessing and making adjustments as we move toward full-scale destruction operations."

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